A

FREE BRITON's ADVICE

TO THE

FREE CITIZENS

OF

DUBLIN.

NUMB. II.

Qui Parti Civium consulunt, Partem negligunt, inducunt in Urbem rem perniciosissimam, Seditionem, &c.

CICERO. Off. L. 1.

DUBLIN:
Printed by and for OLI. NELSON, at *Milton's*-Head in *Skinner-Row*, 1748.

(*Price One Penny.*)

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THO' it cannot be ſaid of any Man, who writes to the Publick, of publick Affairs, that he is not a Party-Writer; yet it may be ſaid of ſome, that they are not Writers for Faction. While Friends to the Conſtitution can be found, the Man, who embarks in the Defence of it, embarks on the Side of thoſe Friends; and every Attempt to preſerve the Conſtitution muſt be directly or indirectly an Attack upon thoſe who would deſtroy it. That neither private Intereſt nor perſonal diſlike or perſonal Friendſhip, but the bare Love of their Country may be a Motive for ſome Men to act, if it can-

not be believ'd, can at leaſt be ſuppos'd. And that thoſe who ſeek the welfare of their Country only, whatever be the Motive, cannot be juſtly enroll'd among thoſe who make up the Cry in a Faction, is too clear to need Demonſtration. It is equally true, tho' leſs clear, that there may be Friends to the Conſtitution, who are Enemies to the Adminiſtration. The Conſtitution is the Property of every individual. Miniſters are the Stewards or Guardians empower'd to preſerve and improve it. But if bad Guardians are found, (which is very poſſible) who deſtroy or attempt to deſtroy it, thoſe Perſons invade the Rights of, and are accountable to, every Individual. And if the Perſon or Perſons, if ſuch there be, appointed to redreſs the Grievances of the People, do not redreſs them, then, not only the Aggreſſors, but thoſe who deny them redreſs, have broke the Conſtitutional Tye, by which the Society is united, and reſolv'd themſelves into a State of Nature.

THAT the greateſt Security of the People, againſt the incroachments and uſurpations of their Superiors, is to keep the Spirit of Liberty conſtantly awake, is an undeniable Truth. How neceſſary to the Being of any

Commu-

Community it is to have a proper Balance of Power among the Parts; and of what Conſequence the Spirit of Liberty is, towards the Eſtabliſhment and preſervation of ſuch a Balance, may, I think, be ſeen from a ſhort View of the firſt Ages of the Commonwealth of *Rome*. If the meaneſt are able to glean any Advantage from this Paper, and no honeſt Man is offended therewith, my Purpoſe will be anſwered.

After the Expulſion of *Tarquin*, the Conſtitution of *Rome* ſuffered a conſiderable Change: The Power, which was before lodged in the King and the Senate, was now transferred to the Senate and two Conſuls, annual Magiſtrates elected from the Senate. The Legiſlative and the Executive Authority were confin'd to theſe two Bodies. And tho' the People retain'd the Privilege of electing Senators, which was inherent to them ſince the firſt framing of the Conſtitution, yet they gain'd none by the Revolution, and even that Privilege was ſo reſtrain'd, that it was little more than a Name: For the Inhabitants of *Rome* were divided into *Nobles* and *Commons*, between whom even Intermarriages were forbid, and from the Nobles only had the People a Right of electing Sena-

tors. Both Parties had indeed bound themſelves, and their Poſterity, as far as was poſſible, by an inviolable Oath, never to ſuffer kingly Power to be re-eſtabliſhed; but ſtill the People were in Danger from the Senate and Conſuls; a Body of Men might combine to enſlave them, and many Tyrants are more grievous than one. The firſt increaſe of their Power, and check upon the Nobles, was given by *Valerius Publicola* a wiſe Conſul, who enacted a Law, allowing to every Citizen who was condemn'd to Death or Corporal Puniſhment, a Right of appealing to the People. This Right belong'd to the Commons in the Time of the Kings, but the violation of their Liberties by *Tarquin* made it neceſſary to revive it. And it was ordered by a ſecond Law, that no Perſon, upon Pain of Death, ſhould take upon him the Office of a Magiſtrate, without the Conſent of the People. This was ſome Relief, ſome Security againſt Injuſtice; but ſtill they were liable to Oppreſſion, and oppreſſed they were. The Commons fought the Battles of the Republick. They had no Pay. The love of their Country and the Love of Glory were ſufficient Motives in thoſe Days. Their Lands were waſted by the Invaſions of their Neighbours, their Goods raviſhed, and their

Houſes burn'd. Unable to ſupport themſelves, or pay the Taxes, which were demanded, they had recourſe to borrowing from the Nobles, who ſupplied their Wants, but exacted Intereſt upon Intereſt, to ſuch Exceſs, that their Grievances became unſupportable. They were confin'd and ſhackled, they look'd out for an immediate Redreſs; but it was only in the Power of the Nobles to give it. The ſpirit of Liberty then began to exert itſelf. They demanded a Remittance of all Debts, and till that was granted, refus'd to take Arms in Defence of the City. The Senators were ſollicitous to maintain their Power. They knew that the People complain'd with Juſtice; but were ſo far from complying with their Demands, that they took occaſion from this diviſion to increaſe their own Power. They propos'd the Creation of a New Magiſtrate, call'd *Dictator*, whoſe Office ſhould expire at the end of ſix Months, whoſe Will ſhould be abſolute, and from which there ſhould be no Appeal: They amus'd the People with Hopes that this Magiſtrate would redreſs their Grievances, and the People, (whoſe Love to the Republick, and moderation in their Proceedings, is remarkable thro' their whole Hiſtory believ'd it. A Dictator was created from among the Sena-

tors; but they found, too late, that their Complaints were unheeded; and that the Right of Appeal given by the *Valerian* Law, was by this new Magiſtracy deſtroy'd. New Conſuls ſucceeded one another annually; but ſome who were willing to ſerve them wanted Abilities, others had Abilities without the Inclination, and thoſe who had both, were oppos'd by a Majority of the Senate. The People even kept within Bounds. The common Danger united them, to a Man. Kind Promiſes from the Senate led them to the Field; and they fought, as if they had been abſolutely free: But the Senate ſo often eluded and broke their Promiſes, that they found their only Expedient was to have recourſe to themſelves, to ſeparate from the Nobles, and abandon them to the Fury of the Enemies who threatened them. Accordingly they quitted the Camp in one Body. The Nobles were now in the greateſt Perplexity. The Danger from Abroad was imminent, and they were not able to oppoſe it. Frequent Meſſages were ſent to the People, to intreat their Return; but they were inflexible. At laſt the Senate agreed, that Commiſſioners ſhould be ſent to them, with abſolute Power to act as ſhould ſeem beſt for the Welfare of the whole. A Remittance of

Debts

Debts to all who were inſolvent, and a Releaſe to ſuch as were confined, were agreed on; and the preſent Miſeries relieved. But the Eyes of the People were now open. They ſaw that a proper Ballance of Power in the Community was wanting. They ſaw too, of what Conſequence they were to the being of it; and therefore, determin'd to be conſider'd in another light than that of Slaves. They demanded that new Magiſtrates ſhould be choſen out of their own Body, whoſe Buſineſs ſhould be to defend their Rights and Privileges; and ſupport them againſt the Oppreſſions and Uſurpations of the Nobles. It was no Time to contend with them, and immediately five *Tribunes* were created, whoſe Perſons were held ſacred, and whoſe Power was ſuch, that the negative of *one* only put a Stop to any Proceedings of the Senate. I hope the Publick will not be offended with a ſhort View of the Conſtitution of that City, after the Election of theſe new Magiſtrates.

The Conſuls were the ſupreme Officers in *Rome*. To them was entruſted the executive Power, together with that of ſummoning Aſſemblies and preſiding at Elections. In time of War, their Power was almoſt abſolute,

ſolute. In the Camp, there was no Appeal from their Judgment, and the publick Treaſure was expended at their Diſcretion. To the Senate belong'd the Power of trying all extraordinary Crimes, of judging private Cauſes which related to the State, of ſending Embaſſies, of cauſing War to be declar'd, of giving Audience and Anſwers to Ambaſſadors, and of deciding Differences between their Allies. The Accounts of the publick Revenues were laid before them, and the Treaſurers could diſpoſe of no Part of the Finances, without their Leave, except to the Conſuls. To the People belong'd the Privileges of rewarding and puniſhing, of conferring Offices, of inſtituting and aboliſhing Laws, and of determining War, Peace, and Alliances. From theſe different Powers, veſted in different Parts of the Republick, reſulted a mutual Dependency on each other; while each Part, in its own Proceedings, was abſolutely Free and Independent; and from this Harmony ſprung the greatneſs of that City, which made ſo glorious a Figure, and extended her Conqueſts over all the known World. But all was the Effect of a true Spirit of Liberty. Had the People been ſupine, corrupt or ignorant; the Republick had continu'd in the State it

was

was in immediately after the extinction of kingly Government; and inſtead of arriving at that Pitch of Grandeur and preſerving its Freedom above four Hundred Years, would probably have ſunk into Corruption and Slavery, and become a Prey to its Neighbours within the Space of one Century. But the Creation of the Tribunes, put a Stop to the Oppreſſion and Incroachments of the Nobles. The two great Bodies were now a mutual Check on each other. No Cabals could be formed, no Propoſals made which the People were not aware of, and able, by the Voice of one Tribune only, to oppoſe. Thus I have at leaſt endeavour'd to prove, that no Community can ſubſiſt long where there is not a proper Ballance of Power among the Parts; and of what Conſequence a Spirit of Liberty is to eſtabliſh ſuch a Ballance. It will not perhaps, be unpleaſing to the Publick to ſhew, in another Paper, how the Spirit of Liberty decay'd, and by what various Ways a Spirit of Faction grew up, and at laſt reduc'd that great Republick to abſolute Slavery.

WHETHER the Conſtitution of your City, in any kind reſembles that of Old *Rome*; whether a Power, like that of the Tribunes, was lodged in any Part of your Community to

put

put a Stop to the Proceedings of another Part, and whether ſuch Power, together with that of electing Magiſtrates of any Claſs or Denomination, has been unjuſtly wreſted from that Body, you can beſt determine. But if this be the Caſe, and any Faction (taking Advantage of the Circumſtances of the Times, or the Weakneſs or Supineneſs of the Parts inveſted with ſuch Powers) have plundered the People; it becomes you, as you would be thought free, as you would really be free, to exert yourſelves vigorouſly; to leave no Means untry'd to recover your loſt Privileges; and difficult as it may ſeem, it muſt be allowed to be more eaſy then it is to obtain new Privileges, yet even this the Spirit of Liberty could effect in *Rome*. Beſides; your Malady muſt every Day grow more inveterate, and every Addition to the Power of your Enemies is a Diminution of yours. Suppoſe theſe Men ſhould go into your Aſſemblies, and with uncommon unheard-of Inſolence, aſſume the Chair; and preſcribe to you in your private Councils, would you ſit down tamely and bear ſuch Indignities? Pardon the Suppoſition, but when the Good of my *Fellow-Subjects* is in Debate, I can and will ſuppoſe even worſe Conſequences. If there be any whom the Love of their Country only is not ſufficient to

rouze,

rouze, I hope there are none whom the Senſe of Diſhonour will not: Tho' heavy Shackles be not yet impos'd on you, unleſs you ſhew that even ſlender Chains are grievous, you muſt expect heavier. I would here conclude, but leſt ſome ſhould miſtake what I mean by a Spirit of Liberty, I ſhall deſcribe it in the beſt Manner I am able.

A Spirit of Liberty is a watchful Spirit, and upon the firſt Appearance of Danger gives the Alarm. It is undaunted and ſpeaks without Reſerve to the higheſt Powers. It is a benevolent Spirit, and knows no Intereſt divided from the Publick. It is candid, as Truth. It ſeldom errs; and then is open to Conviction. But this Spirit exerts itſelf differently, as Occaſions differ, and the Minds in which it is implanted. When it is to fight againſt eſtabliſhed ſupported Corruptions or Uſurpations, it is warm, it is vehement, it paints the Miſery in its ſtrongeſt Colours, and brings it home to every Individual. It increaſes by Oppoſition, and riſes upon the Neck of Faction. And if to this Spirit be added a ſtrong Conception, it will rather loſe its being then the ſmalleſt Privilege.

STRANGE it is that Men ſhould be found abject enough to tremble at the very Thought of ſpeaking Truth to Power! Even to unauthorized

thorized Power! Much ſtranger that Men who profeſs to be free, ſhould conceive Danger in the Vehemence of a Spirit of Liberty! They cannot diſtinguiſh between the honeſt juſt Uſe of that brave Spirit, and the Abuſe of it. The Bounds I confeſs are nice, and at ſome Times difficult to be diſcovered; but this they will certainly allow, that a free Spirit, be its Workings ever ſo ſtrong, cannot be dangerous unleſs licentious; and then it is more than free, nor can it be licentious, while the Ends propoſed are good, and the Means to attain them juſt and equitable. Private Regard may ſometimes, to ſerve a baſe Purpoſe, borrow the Appearance of Publick Spirit, and cloak the Deceit with Warmth, but the Maſk will ſoon be diſcover'd, and Infamy is the leaſt, but certain, Conſequence. The Man who is actuated by a truly free Spirit, feels every Oppreſſion, and ſhews that he feels it; and is always active to redreſs. But allowing that a Spirit of Liberty, when oppoſed by Faction, ſhould ſwell into Licence, (which I hope will never be the Caſe in theſe Realms) it is undoubtedly more deſirable than to ſink into Non-reſiſtance and Slavery. The Former is the Exceſs of a Virtue which Time or other Circumſtances may reduce to proper Bounds. It is the Overflowing of a refreſh-

refreſhing Spring, whoſe Current is oppos'd, which returns to its proper Channel when the Dam is broken down. The Latter is an abſolute Want of that Virtue, than which Famine is not more deplorable. I beg Leave to illuſtrate this by the familiar Characters of a profuſe and a covetous Man. Liberality is the Virtue, the Goal, from which both deviate; but the one goes beyond it, the other never aims to arrive at it. The profuſe Man is liberal, but liberal to Exceſs, and his Error is, that by doing too much for others, he ruins himſelf, and deſtroys the very Foundation of ſerving Mankind: The Covetous Man has no Liberality, does no good to himſelf, and hurts Mankind in general. Time may reduce the profuſe Man to a proper Degree of Liberality. He is a Tree which ſuffers by being ſurcharged with Fruit. The covetous Man is the barren Fig, and deſerves only a Curſe. The Spirit of Liberty then, is a Mean between Faction and Licence. It aims at no private Good that is not connected with the Publick, and takes no dangerous Meaſures till the mildeſt have been tried and found ineffectual.

If it be ſaid by the Indolent amongſt you, that it is difficult to rouſe ſuch a Spirit, when

it

it has long lain dormant: Let them know, that difficult tho' it be, it is possible, and therefore worthy the Concern of every honest Man; and when it is rouz'd, it comes abroad like a Giant refresh'd with Sleep. It drags Faction from her dark Holes to Publick Justice, and strikes Terror into Foreign and Domestick Enemies. If then, my Fellow-Subjects, you are not determined with open Arms to receive Slavery, at this Time let Virtue and the Spirit of Liberty be your Guides.

HELVIDIUS PRISCUS.

The End of the Second ADVICE.